MARVEL

BEMIS
TALAJIĆ
MARZAN
MRVA

FOOLKILLER™

#1
NOW!

#1

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE THE KIND OF GUY WHO COULD OWN A MAN PURSE.

UP TO A MONTH AGO, I WAS WORKING CLASS, STRICTLY CARGO SHORTS AND WIFE-BEATERS. A DECADE OR SO OFF FROM ***FULL-ON FANNY PACK.***

NOW I'VE FLOWN PAST BEING SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE AND I MIGHT JUST BE SOCIALLY REPUTABLE.

I HAVE A PROPER JOB: GREG SALINGER, PSYCHOTHERAPIST. I LIVE IN QUEENS, WHICH IS LIKE THE NEXT BROOKLYN (BROOKLYN IS REALLY COOL NOW).

AND YES, I ***CAN*** PULL OFF THE MAN PURSE.

COME ON...YOU CAN FIT ANYTHING YOU NEED FOR YOUR DAY IN IT. MORE IMPORTANTLY, STUFF YOU MIGHT ***MAYBE*** NEED FOR YOUR DAY. WHAT AN INVENTION.

IT'S ONE OF THOSE LUXURIES OF NORMALCY THAT WAS SO FAR BEYOND MY GRASP WHEN I WAS A ***MURDEROUS VIGILANTE.***

YEAH, I WAS A PRETTY MESSED-UP GUY.

BUT NOW...

...I'M THE DUDE ON THE *OTHER* SIDE OF THE COUCH.

SO, RODNEY. IS THAT...FACE PAINT? MAKE-UP?

IT'S DRIED BLOOD.

REALLY?

YOU WALK AROUND WITH REAL BLOOD CAKED ON YOUR FACE?

THAT'S RIGHT.

FROM SOMEONE YOU, LIKE, BEAT DOWN RECENTLY?

OR DO YOU JUST KEEP A BUNCH OF OLD BLOOD LYING AROUND?

YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW, MAN.

IT SEEMS LIKE A LOT OF EFFORT, RODNEY.

DON'T CALL ME RODNEY, DORK.

THE NAME'S YOUNG RED SKULL.

MMM-HMM.

...I SAID...YOUNG RED SKULL.

I HEARD YOU. YOU'RE GOING FOR THE WHOLE ICON-JUNIOR THING.

LIKE BUCKY. THOSE SCARLET WITCH KIDS. OR "ZOOEY DESCHANEL HAWKEYE."

I'M MY *OWN* MAN, SHRINK.

HEY, THIS IS A SAFE SPACE, RODNEY. YOU'VE GOT NOTHING TO PROVE TO ME.

"SEE, WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, I WAS A ***STONE-COLD KILLER,*** FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THIS GUY ROSS EVERBEST.

"HIS CLAIM TO FAME WAS JUST FIGHTING THIS ONE SLIMY BOG MONSTER. STILL, HE HAD AN INTERESTING WAY OF LOOKING AT THINGS.

"ROSS BASED HIS LIFE AROUND A SHORT STORY WRITTEN BY O. HENRY, THIS GENIUS DRUNK.

"THE STORY CONCERNED THIS ***OLD MAN*** WHO TRAVELED THE WORLD MAKING PEOPLE PAY FOR BETRAYING THEIR INNER TRUTH OR FAILING THEIR MORALS. FOR BEING A 'FOOL.'

"HENCE ***'FOOLKILLER.'***

"THIS INSPIRED A FULL-ON NOVEL BY SOME OTHER CHICK WRITER, A MOVIE WITH THE GUY FROM *PSYCHO* IN IT, AND EVEN SOME OBSCURE, ULTRA-VIOLENT COMIC.

"BEING THE FOOLKILLER ROBBED ME OF SEVERAL YEARS OF MY LIFE.

"AFTER ME, A LOON NAMED ***KURT GERHARDT*** TOOK ON THE FOOLKILLER MANTLE AND PUSHED THINGS TOO FAR. HE USED THE NAME TO ***MURDER PETTY DRUG USERS*** AND ***NEGLECTFUL MOTHERS.***

"SO CLEARLY, I UNDERSTAND THE IDEA OF A LEGACY."

WATCH THIS.

THE PROBLEM IS THIS, RODNEY.

"BEING" THE RED SKULL, EVEN THE WHOLE NOTION OF "BEING" A NAZI, IS JUST SHROUDING YOURSELF IN AN IDEA.

PHILOSOPHIES ARE JUST LIKE COSTUMES, CODE NAMES, POWERS YOU INHERIT... THEY CAN BE ***PERVERTED OR TWISTED*** BASED ON YOUR INNER DAMAGE.

I LEARNED THAT THE HARD WAY.

THIS IS WHERE I HOOK HIM.

BUDDY, YOU DON'T KNOW ME.

S.H.I.E.L.D. JUST DROPPED ME IN YOUR LAP TO KEEP MY NOSE CLEAN WHILE I BETRAY MY FORMER BROTHERS.

THAT'S ***NOT TRUE.***

FAKE WEEZER GLASSES. STILL EFFECTIVE FOR THAT MOMENT WHERE YOU TAKE THEM OFF AND GIVE YOUR PATIENT A MEANINGFUL STARE.

I WAS JUST LIKE YOU BEFORE I FLIPPED MY SCRIPT.

NOW I'VE GOT A DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY. I HAVE A SICK APARTMENT, A LADY WHO LOVES ME AND A STEADY GIG THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE IMPALING ANYONE ON A STICK.

I KNOW YOU...BECAUSE I TOO WAS THE ***VICTIM OF AN IDEA.***

THE BEST PART ABOUT THIS... I'M NOT LYING TO THE KID.

NOW, HOW ABOUT YOU HIT THE MEN'S ROOM AND WASH OFF ALL THAT SCABBY BLOOD?

THAT... THAT SOUNDS GOOD.

I MEAN SERIOUSLY, I CAN SMELL IT FROM HERE. LIKE ***NICKELS AND BUTT SWEAT.***

OKAY.

THEN WHAT?

AND THAT FILLS ME WITH A NEWFOUND SENSE OF JOY.

THEN WE START TO TALK ABOUT YOUR DAD.

LET'S BRING YOU UP TO SPEED ON HOW THE *POOR MAN'S PUNISHER* ENDED UP A SHRINK.

I WAS FLYING BACKWARDS THROUGH A PANE OF GLASS WHEN IT HIT ME.

HERE I WAS, PHONING IT IN AGAIN FOR SOME *COCKAMAMIE HIRED-GUN &%#@#$.*

PAID TO SILENCE SOME EX-MAFIOSO WHO, UNBEKNOWNST TO ME, HAPPENED TO HAVE HIS VERY OWN TWO-YEAR *S.H.I.E.L.D. PROTECTION PLAN.*

I KNOW YOU'RE USED TO SEEING DUDES LIKE DAREDEVIL CRASH THROUGH GLASS WINDOWS AND YOU PROBABLY THINK IT'S NORMAL. (BECAUSE IT LOOKS COOL.)

LET ME TELL YOU; *IT SUCKS.* IT'S SPIKY AND BLEEDY AND SICKENING.

AS I PLIED A LITTLE SHARDLET FROM MY ARM, I ASKED MYSELF AN HONEST QUESTION...

I PEAKED IN LIFE WHILE WEARING THE MOST EMBARRASSING COSTUME OF ALL TIME, LOOKIN' LIKE ZORRO'S DANDY COUSIN. MY M.O. WAS *MURDERING PEOPLE* I DECIDED WERE "FOOLS"...USUALLY DANGEROUS CRIMINALS.

...WHAT THE HELL AM I *DOING?*

WHAT THE HELL IS HE DOING?

I HAD A STINT IN THE MENTAL HOSPITAL, AND THEN FOLLOWED UP MY GENIUS VIGILANTE SHTICK BY JOINING UP WITH A *SCHIZOPHRENIC, SOCIOPATHIC MERCENARY* AND HIS BAND OF MERRY MEN.

I WAS A BIT PLAYER IN THAT CREW, WHICH SAYS A LOT ABOUT MY LEVEL OF LAMENESS.

SINCE I BAILED ON *THAT,* I'VE BEEN TRYING TO MARRY MY FORMER "*I KILL PEOPLE BECAUSE I CONSIDER THEM TO BE 'FOOLS'*" THING WITH "*I KILL PEOPLE FOR MONEY BECAUSE I'M POOR.*"

NO PURPOSE, NO REAL DIRECTION. DRIFTING AIMLESSLY LIKE ROSE AFTER THE SHIP WENT DOWN.

WHOA, WHOA THERE, FOOLKILLER.

STOP MOVING.

I SAID I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO *PUT YOU DOWN,* MAN!

IS HE GOING TO DO SOMETHING CRAZY?

WHAT'S HE DOING?

JUST TAKE ME AWAY, GOONS.

WITHOUT ANY REAL REASON NOT TO, I GAVE MYSELF UP TO S.H.I.E.L.D.

FIGURED I'D BE ALL BUT DONE FROM THERE ON IN.

QUEENS, NEW YORK.
KIND OF THE NEW BROOKLYN.

I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG, THANKS TO *CAPTAIN GARY SPAN.*

YUP, THINGS ARE GOING AWESOME WITH THIS BABY RED SKULL KID.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I WAS ABLE TO REACH HIM IN OUR FIRST SESSION ALONE. IT'S JUST SO... I DON'T KNOW, CAPTAIN SPAN... AFFIRMING.

I'VE GOT A KNACK FOR THIS.

WONDERFUL, GREG.

I'M GLAD THINGS ARE GOING WELL WITH RODNEY.

AND REMEMBER... JUST CALL ME *GARY.*

OR "THE SPAN MAN." SOME OF THE YOUNGER GUYS LIKE THAT ONE.

I SWEAR... I'VE FOUND MY PASSION.

IT'S LIKE I'VE HAD AN EXISTENTIAL MAKEOVER. AND A LITERAL ONE. I COULD PASS FOR AN OLDER, LOOSER RYAN GOSLING.

SHHHH. BRING HIM IN.

IT'S TRUE, GREG. IF WE DIDN'T HAVE TO CONCEAL YOUR PREVIOUS VOCATION, I'D ADVISE YOU TO START AN INSPIRING BLOG.

I'LL KEEP YOU UP TO DATE ON OUR PROGRESS.

I PREDICT HE'LL A MAKE A GREAT S.H.I.E.L.D. RECRUIT. PLUS, HIS FORMER NAZI-CONNECTS SHOULD BE SUPER USEFUL.

MMMMPHHHHH! MMMPHHHH MPHHHH!

PERFECT. I HAVE TO RUN NOW, GREG.

I'M, *UH,* ABOUT TO HEAD INTO A MEETING WITH TONY STARK.

PEACE, MY BROTHER.

BUH-BYE.

=SIGH=

WHAT A GUY.

SPAN! YOU CAN'T RUN FOREVER, YOU TRAITOROUS SON OF A BITCH!

SNUFF ME OUT IF YOU LIKE, BUT WE'RE GONNA SHUT YOUR SICK LITTLE OPERATION D--

BANG

EAT ME, TIN MAN!

TRY TO PUT AN EYE-PATCH ON THAT!!!!!

SOMEONE CLEAN THIS UP AND GET ME MY MINECRAFT.

IT'S BEEN A LONG @#$% DAY.

GREG, COME OUT!

I'VE BEEN LYING HERE RANDILY LONGER THAN ANY GIRL SHOULD HAVE TO...

UGH.

I CAN'T DO THIS.

YOU *SO* CAN.

EASY FOR YOU TO SAY!

THE WORST OUTFIT YOU EVER WORE WAS AN EMO PHASE!

BUT MISTERRRRRR...

...I'VE BEEN SUCH A FOOOOOLLL.

...

UMMMMM...

LIKE, IN WHAT WAY?

I BETRAYED MY BORING BOYFRIEND, GREG. I'M HAVING AN AFFAIR WITH THIS MANLY VIGILANTE.

PLUS, TODAY I CARJACKED AN OLD LADY...

...AND RODE AROUND THE CITY SPENDING HER MONEY ON DRUGS...

...TO SELL TO ERRANT SCHOOL KIDS.

OKAY, BUT JUST THIS ONE TIME.

TOO CUTE.

THAT'S RIGHT, RODNEY. YOU'RE DOING GREAT.

STARE INTO THE TINY COSMIC CUBE REPLICA. FOLLOW IT BACK AND FORTH.

PRETEND WITH ME THAT IT'S THE REAL COSMIC CUBE, NOT A BIZARRE LITTLE TOY.

TODAY WE'RE GOING TO "USE IT" TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR HERO, *JOHANN SCHMIDT*...

AND FIGURE OUT WHY HIS IMAGE RESONATES SO DEEPLY WITH YOU.

"THE RED SKULL'S FATHER TRIED TO DROWN HIM BECAUSE HIS MOTHER DIED DURING CHILDBIRTH.

"*YOUR* MOTHER ABANDONED YOU AND FOREVER BROKE YOUR DAD'S HEART. SO BOTH OF YOU WERE SEEN AS THE STRAW THAT BROKE YOUR PARENTS' BOND.

JA, BRUDER... HEAVY ON THE CORN...

"SCHMIDT WORKED FOR HITLER PERSONALLY AND FELL IN LOVE WITH THE IDEA OF HAVING HIS LEVEL OF INFLUENCE. HE KOWTOWED TO HIM LIKE A WOUNDED PUPPY.

"*YOU* WERE ALWAYS INTIMIDATED BY YOUR DAD--ENOUGH TO TAKE UP HIS CAUSE. BUT YOU WANTED MORE.

"FEEL THE WEIGHT OF THIS TRUTH ON YOU LIKE...A HEAVY WEIGHT.

"THE RED SKULL OUTLIVED HITLER AND BECAME AN ICON HIMSELF, ONE THAT LIVED PAST THE THIRD REICH. BUT WHO IS THE RED SKULL WITHOUT HITLER?

"SIMILARLY, *YOU* TOOK ON HIS NAME TO BECOME A YOUTH LEADER, NOT JUST ANOTHER WASTE-OF-LIFE SKINHEAD. GREATER THAN YOUR FATHER'S LEGACY...BUT STILL ECLIPSED BY HIS SHADOW.

"LET THE CUBE HELP YOU EMBRACE YOUR FRACTURED LITTLE RACIST SOUL.

"YOU CAN HEAL.

"EVEN THOUGH DEEP INSIDE, YOU'LL ALWAYS HATE YOURSELF FOR BECOMING HIM.

"AND YOU'LL ALWAYS FEEL HIS FIST CRASHING DOWN UPON YOU OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

"AND THE BELT. AGAIN AND AGAIN.

"AND YOU'LL NEVER FORGET *THE IRON...*"

"UHHHH... MR. SALINGER?"

GREG?

MOST OF THAT WAS REALLY GREAT AND IT MEANS A LOT, BUT MY DAD NEVER LAID A FINGER ON ME.

OH.

I MUST HAVE BEEN THINKING OF SOMEONE ELSE.

THAT NIGHT, I ATE THRICE COOKED BACON RICE CAKES AT A FASHIONABLE CHINESE RESTAURANT, STARING INTO MELANIE'S SAUCER EYES AND REVELING IN MY SHRINK-ISM.

I JUST KNEW I HAD FINALLY TURNED A CORNER WITH RODNEY AND HIS DAYS OF RACISM AND STUPIDITY WERE OVER. NOW IT WAS TIME TO--

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RING RING

LET ME JUST GRAB THIS, MEL.

RODNEY, I THOUGHT I EXPLAINED TO YOU THIS LINE WAS FOR EMERGENCIES ONLY.

...

MEL, YOU MIGHT HAVE TO BOX UP MY COD RICE.

RODNEY, MY FIRST IMPORTANT PATIENT, AND NOW MY FIRST EMERGENCY CALL.

HE BEGGED ME TO MEET HIM AT A LOADING DOCK IN BROOKLYN... THAT HE WAS IN DESPERATE NEED.

I ASSUMED HE HAD GOTTEN INTO A FIGHT. CLOCKED SOME GUY.

RODNEY?

RODNEY, I'M HERE, WHERE ARE YOU?

RODNEY?

RODN--
OH MY GOD.

I GUESS I SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SHOCKED AT WHAT I FOUND.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE...?

I WAS TEMPTED, MR. SALINGER.

THEY CALLED ME AND SAID THEY HAD A FINAL JOB FOR ME.

ONE THAT WOULD AMPLIFY OUR BROTHERHOOD'S CAUSE FROM A WHISPER TO A SCREAM.

A STOLEN SHIPMENT OF *HYDRA* WEAPONRY.

I TRIED...I TRIED TO SAY NO, BUT THEY JUST REMINDED ME ABOUT ALL THE YEARS I DEDICATED TO THEIR FAMILY. HOW I'LL NEVER HAVE A FAMILY OF MY OWN.

I GOT CAUGHT UP. IT'S MY DAD'S FAULT, RIGHT?

THESE MEN PROBABLY HAD FAMILIES, RODNEY...

TELL S.H.I.E.L.D. I DIDN'T MEAN TO. THAT I'M WORTH SOMETHING!

I WILL, RODNEY.

OF COURSE I WILL.

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING.

WHAT AN EPIC FOOL YOU WERE, RODNEY.

AHGOD.

AGHOD.

RODNEY! WE MADE IT! WHERE YOU AT?

BE AT THE READY, Y'ALL. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE WALKING INTO...

YUP. THAT'S RIGHT. THAT'S HOW YOUNG RED SKULL'S BRIEF AND DERIVATIVE CAREER CAME TO AN END.

ADMITTEDLY, RODNEY WAS PRETTY MESSED UP... BUT DEEP INSIDE HIS HEART, HE WAS A GOOD GUY.

NOW DEEP INSIDE HIS HEART HE'S A DEAD GUY...

...AND AT MY HANDS. EVER BEEN ON A DIET AND THEN BREAK THE SEAL WITH A TWINKIE?

YOU CAN KID YOURSELF THAT YOU'RE NOT STILL HUNGRY.

THAT YOU'RE NOT GNASHING YOUR TEETH FOR JUST ONE MORE.

BUT AS A THERAPIST, I'M A *SCOURGE* OF DENIAL.

AND AT THAT MOMENT, ALL I WANTED WAS ANOTHER BITE.

TO BE CONTINUED!

MARVEL COMICS PROUDLY PRESENTS...

FOOL KILLER

Writer	MAX BEMIS
Penciller	DALIBOR TALAJIĆ
Inker	JOSE MARZAN JR.
Colors	MIROSLAV MRVA
Lettering	VC'S TRAVIS LANHAM
Cover	DAVE JOHNSON
Variant Covers	ROB LIEFELD & JESUS ABURTOV; RON LIM, TOM PALMER & ANDY TROY; DALE KEOWN & JASON KEITH; JEFFREY VEREGGE
Editors	JORDAN D. WHITE & DARREN SHAN
Editor in Chief	AXEL ALONSO
Chief Creative Officer	JOE QUESADA
Publisher	DAN BUCKLEY
Executive Producer	ALAN FINE

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YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS *NEXT?*

DON'T MISS **FOOLKILLER #2**

ZONE